

Local Systems Solutions: A Long-Term Plan for Iowa Homelessness Services

Proposed Plan for FY 2016 Iowa Legislative Appropriation of \$50,000
From IFA staff, August 28, 2015

Purpose: Develop/build out a regional system of providing homelessness services within Iowa. This may or may not particularly focus on Coordinated Entry, especially at the beginning.

Background: IFA received another \$50k legislative appropriation during the state FY15 session to provide administrative support for the Iowa Council on Homelessness. This is the fourth year of this appropriation, and the time period to use the funds is July 2015 – June 2016. Separately, IFA has the option to apply during the upcoming HUD Continuum of Care 2015 competition for a CoC Planning Grant for approximately \$200k, in support of the Iowa Balance of State CoC/the Iowa Council on Homelessness. If awarded, this grant would likely begin in mid- or late-2016.

Plan: Launch a small-scale project in 2015 with the initial \$50k appropriation, to provide limited financial support to regional/local homeless planning groups. If a CoC Planning Grant is awarded this year in support of the same goals, use the additional funds to expand the project beginning in 2016.

Benefits to Communities and Individuals: Benefits include the following:

- Energize regional and local planning efforts and build on the SPPG standards initiative of the past two years.
- Expand on the existing capabilities of the various local homeless planning groups statewide.
- Work meaningfully toward HUD's requirements for CoCs, such as Coordinated Entry. HUD's requirements for system planning are often challenging for a large statewide CoC; this project could support these requirements at a more manageable local level.
- Foster better communication and coordination within and between local communities.
- Encourage expansion of some smaller local groups that currently only serve one city or county, in order to promote consistency across communities.
- Provide modest funding to help meet HUD's requirements.
- Many states have already gone to a regional approach for homeless services, and many other social service systems in Iowa have also already moved toward a regional approach. This helps to bring homelessness services in line with others.
- Support better services for those experiencing homelessness—with a baseline of more consistent services available across a wider spectrum of the state than is currently available.

Benefits to the Council and IFA: Neither the annual legislative appropriations nor the CoC planning grants provide a guaranteed source of funds from year to year. There is also little advance notice in either case. This creates challenges in planning and sustaining initiatives long-term. This proposed project idea provides for a long-term plan for any future legislative appropriations or CoC planning grants, without creating advance commitments, needing additional staff, or relying on external contractors to lead new initiatives each year.

Strategy: Provide modest funding to regional groups, according to the following plan:

- *Applicants:*
 - Regions choose if they want to participate;

- Regions form on their own, proposing the counties they will cover;
 - Encouraged to form according to the map developed by ICA in 2013 showing where people typically travel to receive homelessness services, but could vary within reason;
 - Designate a capable fiscal agent to serve as lead agency;
 - Membership on the Iowa Council on Homelessness would be adapted over time, through attrition, to include representation from as many regions as possible;
 - Initially perhaps limit to 5 – 10 regions, with limited legislative funding. If CoC planning grant is awarded, expand number of regions supported.
- *Funding:*
 - Approximate amounts of \$XXk for each planning group—some could be higher or lower, according to the region served or other factors;
 - Consider if this is awarded through formula or competition;
 - Initially limited amounts of \$5k - \$10k per region, with limited legislative funding. If CoC planning grant is awarded, expand amount provided;
 - Allowable expenses tentatively include:
 - Attending local planning or training meetings;
 - Hosting or attending training related to Coordinated Entry;
 - Hosting or staffing a community's virtual or physical site for Coordinated Entry;
 - Planning and carrying out the annual Point in Time unsheltered count;
 - Supporting coordinated community data collection and reporting;
 - Peer-to-peer training and mentoring related to Iowa Quality Standards and other technical assistance needs that can be supported by the community;
 - Other, TBD.
 - Funding provided on a reimbursement basis for designated allowable expenses, according to documentation sent to IFA by lead agencies.
 - *Expectations of applicants (either currently met, or progressing towards):*
 - Commitment and participation from service providers within the area;
 - Serve a multi-county area (not just a single city);
 - A baseline of services throughout region—including at least emergency shelter and rapid rehousing, and possibly others;
 - Additional services as determined appropriate for the region;
 - Coordinated services among providers within the region;
 - A local/regional Coordinated Entry plan that fits with the overall CoC Coordinated Entry plan;
 - Coordinated data collection/network participation, and a single initial point of contact;
 - Coordinated unsheltered Point in Time count in January each year;
 - Encouraging/coordinating adoption of Iowa Quality Standards (ICH Initiative).
 - Other, TBD.

IFA Administration: As in the past two years, IFA reserves \$5k of the total \$50k legislative appropriation to help with the administrative costs of carrying out the project. If a CoC planning project is funded, IFA splits the funds, with 80% going toward the project described above, and 20% supporting existing IFA costs for CoC coordination and planning during the competition and throughout the year.